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The Bells of San Gabriel

The bells of old San Gabriel—
I'd love to hear them tell
Of all the scenes so wondrous wild,
As seen by each fond bell.

The heart of every Spanish maid—
And each grandee as well,
Would swell with pride and merriment,
At tales the bells could tell.

Methinks I see the Indians come,
Through wild musquite to sell
The beads and blankets—aye, the gold
Sent Spain for each old bell.

They rang in silvery call to prayer—
I've heard the padres tell;
They rang in mournful dirges too—
Each dear San Gabriel bell.

'Twas here the desert children came,
Of sins they had to tell—
Their moc'sinned feet, so firm, so fleet,
Knelt 'neath the prayerful bell.

The Indians, like the years, have fled,
Squaw and pappoose as well;
But soft in memory e'er will ring
The calling of the bell.

They hang like silent sentinels;
Nor years can break the spell
That binds our heart-strings like a cord
To each old mission bell.